

**Steve Beshear**  
**Inaugural Address**  
**Frankfort, KY**  
**December 11, 2007**  
**2 p.m.**

Honored and distinguished guests.

My fellow Kentuckians: Once more, our Commonwealth is at a crossroads. The course we set out upon today will help to determine whether or not we pass on to our children and grandchildren a Kentucky that's better and more prosperous, and more promising than the one we live in today.

We can choose the path of least resistance; the status quo.

Or, we can choose the path of progress. This path will involve new thinking and new ideas. It will require cooperation and patience. And it will demand courage.

The status quo is unacceptable to me. There's too much to do. We need to act.

We often look to the past to find clues to the future. Our challenge as Kentuckians is to hold fast to the values that embody Kentucky's past, and learn from them as we create our own future.

Kentucky was America's first frontier. The first state west of the Appalachians. Our ancestors succeeded by creating opportunities, working hard, building communities, and putting their faith in God and in each other. That is the legacy they left to us.

We need to get back to those values so that we can be proud of the legacy we leave to our own children.

However, in many ways, the Kentucky of today has stood still while others have moved forward.

When it comes to economic and educational opportunities, Kentucky has fallen behind.

When it comes to investing in our people, we've too often fallen short.

When it comes to hope for the future, we've become resigned to watching helplessly as many of our children move to other states where better opportunities summon them.

But it doesn't have to stay that way. If we address the challenges that face us, and take bold steps to meet them, I believe that we can make Kentucky America's Next Frontier.

A frontier of imaginative solutions;  
A frontier for new technology and new industries;  
A frontier that protects the environment, while creating opportunities;  
A frontier that attracts entrepreneurs, tourists, retirees;  
A frontier that keeps our own graduates right here at home.

My administration will be about our shared future. We have a responsibility to work together and I have a responsibility to lead. I take that responsibility seriously because our prosperity is at stake.

I ask everyone in this great commonwealth of ours – Democrat, Republican and Independent, white, black and brown, from Pikeville to Paducah, from our bustling cities to our small towns, to our farms both large and small – to join hands with me in meeting this challenge.

We have just come through the noble American rite of a hard-fought campaign; as a result, it is easy to see what divides us. Instead, what I want to see, and what I do see today, is what unites us.

As Kentuckians, and as Americans, we share the same basic values.

We're passionate about our freedom, we celebrate our differences, we cherish our faith, and we love our families.

Our history is filled with examples of overcoming division. During the Civil War, our Commonwealth was split between those siding with the Confederacy and those favoring the Union.

The years following the war were hard, but our ancestors came together to build the foundation for a modern Kentucky. Eventually, they worked through their differences for the sake of the future.

It's time to focus again on what unites us. Only then will we achieve truly great things.

Abraham Lincoln, whose 200<sup>th</sup> birthday we will begin to celebrate 2 months from now, said in his first presidential inaugural address:

*"We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break, our bonds of affection."*

Lincoln's plea for unity in 1861 is no less relevant today. While we have made extraordinary progress as a people since that time, we still must work to overcome our differences and not allow them to impede our progress.

Sixty years earlier, in his 1801 inaugural address, Thomas Jefferson said: "every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle."

Now, some may disagree with me on opinions, but let's agree on principles and goals.

We can accomplish much over the next four years, but only if we work together for the common good.

Only if we're open about the challenges we face and honest about the solutions.

Only if we're open to new ideas and new ways of thinking.

Only if we put the interests of all Kentuckians ahead of the interests of political parties, individuals and special interests.

The great Kentucky Senator Henry Clay once said: *“Government is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees. And both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.”*

Let us remember those wise words as we begin the difficult and exciting task of creating a new Kentucky for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

A Kentucky where the youngest among us have expanded learning opportunities that will serve a lifetime;

A Kentucky where the oldest among us are not forced to choose between food and medicine;

A Kentucky where citizens trust that their leaders are doing the people’s business, not their own;

And a Kentucky where it doesn’t matter if an idea is a Democratic idea or a Republican idea, as long as it’s a good idea.

My administration will be looking for good ideas to help Kentucky innovate and become a leader among the states.

I expect to earn your trust, not to simply be given it. I expect my administration to be accountable – and it starts at the top, with me.

That’s why one of my first official acts as governor will be to require all my top appointees to take extensive training in laws relating to ethics and the merit system, and to pledge to follow them.

In addition, one of my first proposals to the legislature will be a package of new ethics laws to govern us – increasing penalties for violating the ethics code, strengthening protections for whistleblowers, and changing the way appointments to the Ethics Commission itself are made.

We need to get our own house in order before we can be trusted to do the people’s business. I look forward to working with legislators of both parties to pass tough new ethics and accountability standards we can all be proud of.

We’ve seen too often what happens when the people don’t trust their government. Enacting new ethics standards will help to regain some of that trust.

So will governing effectively, efficiently and humbly. This, I pledge to you.

And that starts with being honest about the serious challenges we face as I take office today.

The current state of the economy means that we will need to be jealous guardians of the public's money. We will need to make difficult choices and set clear priorities. We will need to show the courage to cut back where we can now in order to invest in what we must in the future.

My priorities are ones we all share: investing more in the education of our people to better prepare them to compete in the global economy; creating more opportunities by attracting better paying jobs throughout Kentucky, in industries that promise long-term growth not just for today's workers but also for tomorrow's; and making health care more affordable for all our people so that every family can provide their children the care they deserve, and so that no senior need go without the medications they need.

We must address these challenges if we are to preserve and protect our quality of life and build the future that we all hope for.

A future where our children don't need to move away to find good-paying jobs with benefits;

A future where new ideas will create new opportunities and new industries; A future where Kentucky is competing not just with our neighbors, but with the world.

I see Kentucky as one big family. We may have our disagreements, but we share the same values and we want what's best for our children and our grandchildren. And we want to keep our families together.

Wouldn't it be something if we could build a Kentucky that our children would not want to leave and that would attract many others because of the opportunity we would offer them here?

The Bible states, in Jeremiah, chapter 31, verse 17:

*"So there is hope for your future," declares the LORD. "Your children will return to their own land."*

That, my friends, would be something!

This inauguration is a new beginning. Now is the time to put aside our preconceived notions and our ideologies.

Instead, let us strive to work with those who differ with us and forge new alliances. Let us consider new ideas and revisit old ones. Let us demand excellence and honesty. And let us listen. For if we listen, we will never forget why we're here or who we're here to serve.

I will never forget that I serve the people of the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

Thank you. God bless you.

Now let's get to work!

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